



**U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)  
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

***ERITREA –Drought***

Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2003

January 30, 2003

*This Fact Sheet updates USAID/OFDA Eritrea Fact Sheet #1 for fiscal year 2002, dated November 14, 2001.*

**Background**

- In 2002, below-average minor season rains (March-May) severely hindered land preparation for the main planting season (June-September). Additionally, main season rains, which are crucial to crop production in the drought-prone Anseba, Northern Red Sea, and Southern Red Sea zones, as well as the breadbasket zones of Gash Barka, Debub, and Maekel, were sporadic and insufficient. In response, the Government of the State of Eritrea's (GSE) Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) issued an appeal in August 2002 to the humanitarian community for a timely response to the drought situation. The GSE identified a food production deficit of nearly 300,000 metric tons (MT) and significant humanitarian needs in the health and water/sanitation sectors.
- According to the 2003 U.N. Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Eritrea, an estimated 1.4 million out of a total of 3.3 million people are affected by drought conditions associated with major crop failure in agricultural areas and the substantial loss of livestock among pastoral communities.

**Current Situation**

- In a report issued on January 3, 2003, USAID's Famine Early Warning System Network (USAID/FEWSNET) warned that 1.4 million Eritreans are currently highly food insecure due to insufficient rainfall for crops and livestock, labor shortages due to continued military mobilization efforts, pressure on communities to absorb Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees, and a downturn in Eritrea's economy.
- On December 20, 2002, the World Food Program (WFP) issued a communiqué expressing concern that existing food supplies will be insufficient to meet the humanitarian needs of the affected population in the coming months. WFP indicated that more than 2 million people are currently affected by a succession of droughts over the last four years.
- Based on assessment data compiled by a comprehensive demographic and health survey in July and August 2002, UNICEF reported significant malnutrition rates in 15 to 20 percent of children surveyed. In addition, UNICEF's report, released on December 16, 2002, identified more than 10,000 children in need of immediate nutritional support.
- USAID/OFDA field reports from November 2002 indicated that localized pockets of acute humanitarian need existed across the country. The team concluded that while widespread and prolonged drought has played a significant role in placing more than 1.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, other significant factors include military and national service conscription leading to labor shortages, displacement of war-affected populations, influxes of deportees from Ethiopia, repatriation of refugees until recently, and border closures with Sudan and Ethiopia.

**U.S. Government Response**

- On December 2, 2002, U.S. Ambassador to Eritrea Donald J. McConnell declared a disaster in Eritrea due to food security concerns throughout the country and the significant loss of main season crops in western Eritrea.
- USAID/OFDA has committed funds totaling \$697,435 to CARE to implement a food security program. The objectives of the program are to improve the level of food security of vulnerable households in the severely drought-affected targeted project areas of Gash Barka and Debub Zones. Additional funding actions in FY 2003 by USAID/OFDA are expected in the food security and water/sanitation sectors.
- In late October and early November 2002, USAID/OFDA dispatched a three-person team including food security and health experts to Eritrea to assess the humanitarian situation. Based on assessments of the affected areas and discussions with the U.N., NGOs, and the GSE, the USAID/OFDA team recommended that a comprehensive seed assessment be carried out and that pastoralists should be encouraged to destock their herds due to limited water resources and fodder.
- USAID/OFDA's Regional Advisor for the Horn of Africa, as well as health specialists from USAID/OFDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) traveled to Eritrea from August 1-15, 2002. The USAID/OFDA team met with the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC), U.N. agencies, and NGOs to discuss the current drought situation in the country. The team also traveled to the Northern Red Sea and Anseba regions to assess the overall situation. USAID/OFDA's discussions and field assessments

concluded that underlying chronic food security problems would be severely exacerbated throughout the country if rains continued to fail. Additionally, drought conditions have had an immediate negative impact on water sources with most areas experiencing declining water tables and a total loss of water points in some areas of Anseba, Northern Red Sea, and Southern Red Sea zones.

- USAID emergency food assistance to Eritrea in FY 2003 totals 30,600 metric tons and is valued at \$13.2 million. This food assistance includes wheat, blended cereal, beans and vegetable oil. USAID/FFP provided more than 13,400 MT of emergency food assistance in FY 2002, valued at \$5.8 million.

#### U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ERITREA

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Regions</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<b>FY 2003 (to date)</b>				
USAID/OFDA <sup>1</sup> .....				\$697,435
	CARE	Food Security	Gash Barka, Debub	\$697,435
USAID/FFP .....				\$13,200,000
	WFP	12,000 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$5,800,000
	Mercy Corps	18,600 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$7,400,000
<b>Total USAID Humanitarian assistance in FY 2003 (to date) .....</b>				<b>\$13,897,435</b>
<b>Total USG Humanitarian assistance in FY 2003 (to date) .....</b>				<b>\$13,897,435</b>

#### Public Donation Information

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for their drought response efforts in Eritrea can be found at <http://www.interaction.org/eastafrica/index.html>. Information on other organizations responding may be available at [www.reliefweb.org](http://www.reliefweb.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they: allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, warehouse space, etc); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information on making donations and volunteering services can be found at:
  - USAID: [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov) -> "Disaster Assistance" -> "How Can I Help?"
  - The Center for International Disaster Information: [www.cidi.org](http://www.cidi.org) or 703-276-1914
  - InterAction: [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org) -> "Guide to Appropriate Giving"
- Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [www.reliefweb.org](http://www.reliefweb.org).

USAID/OFDA fact sheets can be obtained from the USAID web site at [http://www.usaid.gov/hum\\_response/ofda/situation.html](http://www.usaid.gov/hum_response/ofda/situation.html)

<sup>1</sup> USAID/OFDA funding indicates committed and/or obligated amounts as of January 30, 2003.